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ABSTRACT

This study compared both the degree of authoritarianism exhibited by school counselors as compared to other helping gorups, and the extent to which authoritarian counselors were successful. The latter was determined by the number of youths who did find employment. The study found that school counselors were significantly more authoritarian than manpower counselors, social workers, and counselors from other settings. It found, furthermore, that the less authoritarian, more openminded counselors got better results in terms of employment success for their counselees, than did those who were more authoritarian. (NG)

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DOES AUTHORITARIAN "BIG STICK" COUNSELLING GET RESULTS WITH UNEMPLOYED YOUTH?

by
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A SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED TO THE
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INTRODUCTION:

To begin with I want to say that I am truly honoured to be able to present to you some of the ideas and findings generated in my recent research at Simon Fraser University. The research was done in connection with the graduate studies in administration I pursued during 1971 through '74 for the Masters in Business Administration Degree.

The study I would like to tell you about attempts to integrate a number of behavioural science concepts - familiar to me as a social worker - with concepts that derive from economics, commerce and the business sector generally. For our purposes it would probably be well if I quickly reviewed the hypothetical and methodological aspects, then in more detail got into the significant findings and practical suggestions deriving from my thesis entitled:

"HELPING UNEMPLOYED YOUTH FIND WORK"

An Examination of Authoritarianism and Other
Characteristics Presented by a Group of Counsellors
Serving Young People Seeking Employment

HOW THE STUDY WAS DEVELOPED:

The first research question I wanted to deal with in the study centered on the extent of authoritarianism exhibited by different kinds of counsellors. Were school counsellors more authoritarian, dogmatic, close-minded or intolerant in their counselling practice than say social workers, manpower counsellors, psychiatrists or clergymen? Assuming that there would be differences in the measured

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level of authoritarianism amongst the different counsellors in different settings, I then wanted to look at how the authoritarian approach (as the core personality style of the counsellor) got results with unemployed youth seeking jobs. Would highly authoritarian counsellors with a "big stick" Archie Bunker approach to young job seekers get more of these young people "off their asses" and working than their low-authoritarian colleagues? Would the tolerant, democratic, low key, open-minded counsellors help get more jobs for their young (15 - 25 years of age) counsellees?

As it turned out there were far more school counsellors in the sample than any other kind. So we must bear in mind in this analysis that we are generally focussing on high school students entering the labour force - whether this be temporarily as in summer employment, or permanently as upon school leaving. Also, the study period was the month of April, 1973 when many students start to wonder out loud - "what am I going to do when school is out?"

In any event what we were looking at here was:

(a) the level of counsellor authoritarianism - shcool counsellors, manpower counsellors vs social workers, etc. and

(b) what counselling style seemed most effective with young job seekers who wanted work but could not find it on their own.

In terms of measuring effectiveness I wanted to look at the proportion of counsellees who actually got jobs following counselling. This would be used as a measure of counselling performance.

RESEARCH METHODS:

A questionnaire was developed and mailed to 378 counsellors across British Columbia who were members or eligible for membership in the Canadian Guidance and Counselling Association. The questionnaire provided for a great deal of descriptive data about the counsellors - their age, sex, various settings, workloads, educational backgrounds,

etc. It also got at the number of young people being counselled regarding employment, counselling methods, output in terms of the number of counsellees actually obtaining jobs after counselling and so on.

A critical part of the questionnaire consisted of the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale aimed at measuring the level of counsellor authoritarianism. The Rokeach Scale of course derives from the earlier California F. Scale developed by Theodore Adorno. Milton Rokeach at Michigan State, however, went much further than the earlier California group in that he took a broader perspective in measuring the authoritarian personality. Rokeach describes this in his classical book "THE OPEN AND CLOSED MIND" where he postulates that authoritarianism is best measured in terms of the whole belief - disbelief system that we all possess as human beings. The more a person thinks in terms of black and white, reward and punishment, etc., the more he is congruent with closed systems, cognitive patterns and the more rigid and authoritarian he will be. On the other hand, the open-minded person is governed more by inner self-actualizing forces and less by irrational impulses. He will exhibit a non-judgmental attitude in his social relationships and not accept or reject people on the grounds of belief congruence. He will be flexible, tolerant, accepting and non-authoritarian.

I used the powerful Rokeach Scale in the research not only because of its capability at measuring different levels of authoritarianism, but also since it has been found to be one of the most promising instruments for differentiating between counsellors judged effective and those judged ineffective - the judgments being made by administrators, colleagues, counsellees and independent raters of counselling performance in a wide variety of counselling settings.

When the questionnairs were returned I found that 77 were usable. So the sample that emerged consisted of 77 counsellors.

I should also note in passing that in working with the data yielded by the

questionnaires the Mann Whitney U Test for small samples was used where statistical tests of significance were needed.

FINDINGS:

Out of the 77 counsellors in the sample there were:

35 School Counsellors
8 Manpower Counsellors
7 Social Workers
4 College Counsellors
4 Nurses
3 University Counsellors
3 Welfare Workers
3 Psychologists
2 Physicians - General Practice
2 Psychiatrists
2 Rehabilitation Counsellors
2 Probation Officers
2 Clergymen

From these figures we see that 45% of the sample was made up of school counsellors - but a suprisingly large cross-section of other counselling types is also represented: and this is what the C.G.C.A. is all about isn't it? - bringing different kinds of professionals together from a wide variety of callings.

With regard to counsellor authoritarianism it was found (whether we might agree or not) that school counsellors were significantly more au thoritarian than Manpower Counsellors and social workers. Moreover, school counsellors were generally more authoritarian than the counsellors in the sample from other settings; i.e., psychological and psychiatric services, nursing and medical services, rehabilitation and even probation services. Why should this be so?

Could it be that school counsellors are generally authoritarian because they reflect the traditionally based school system in British Columbia? Does the system require that they be controlling and dogmatic? How else would they fit in with the regimentation, the rigidity and the "pass-fail syndrome" which seems so prevalent in our educational system.

By the same token, are social workers who score low on authoritarianism, extensions of a so-called permissive, do-you-own-thing social welfare-human resources system which avoids confronting recepients of social services with the cold hard realities of our contemporary dog-eat-dog society? I think not, because when we look at counsellor performance at least in one area, that is in the area of getting or helping to get jobs for youthful counsellees looking for work, it is found that the less authoritarian, more open-minded, approach gets better results. This is so no matter what kind of counsellor we are talking about.

For example, in this research I found that highly authoritarian school counsellors had about one third of their job seeking counsellees getting work. This was a significantly lower proportion than for the low authoritarian counsellors in other settings who had just over 61% of their counsellees obtaining jobs. Basically what I am saying here is that we as counsellors have to look at counselling performance; the accomplishment of counselling goals such as job obtainment when we start talking about who is more or less authoritarian than the next guy.

We need to look at ourselves and say how rigid and intolerant am I? If I were less close-minded - if I worked in a less controlling, more democratic work environment, would I be more effective as a counsellor - as a human being?

Despite the introspection invited by some of these findings, it should be stressed that the 77 counsellors under study saw a multitude of counsellees during the month of April, 1973. In just one month this group of counsellors directly served 4510

persons. This represents a tremendous amount of time, energy and commitment. Out of the 4510 counsellees seen, 1462 of them, or about one third, were youth seeking paid employment. But what did the counsellors do as they focussed on job counselling with these young people?

The following list describes in decending order the frequency with which various helping methods were used. For example counsellors:

- encouraged counsellees to refer themselves to prospective employers.
- made written or telephoned referrals to prospective employers.
- discussed with counsellees the expectations of employers.
- encouraged counsellees to refer themselves to Canada Manpower.
- helped counsellees develop Opportunities for Youth or Local Initiatives Programmes.
- sent counsellees on Creative Job Search Training courses.
- administered vocational trestting.
- helped counsellees place work wanted ads in newspapers.
- referred counsellees to Youth Employment Service (Y.E.S.).
- suggested counsellee look in Yellow Pages for Employment possibilities.
- helped write resumes.
- engaged parents, guardians and other family members in assisting with job finding.
- provided counsellees with special tutoring so that grades would be completed and jobs obtained.

There is indeed a certain kind of desperation that seems to possess young people looking for work. They are part of the population balloon that got blown up with the very high Canadian birth rate from about 1944 through to 1961 or 62: one of the highest birth rates in the world during these expansionary years. As a consequence we now have one of the fastest growing labour forces in the Western industrial world. The total labour force is about 10 million people now and about

2½ million, or one quarter of the entire labour force, are youth under 25 years of age. There simply are not enough jobs - to say nothing of jobs of the right kind - to put this labour force fully to work. We therefore have the highest rate of unemployment of any industrial country in the world. At any one time we will have about 500,000 persons unemployed and seeking work and about 260,000 of them will be youth in their late teens and early twenties. The problem is even worse in the spring and summer months when something like 1.3 million students hit the labour force. This is a very serious economic and political problem and the country urgently needs to come to grips with it. This kind of influx into the labour force will go on unabated until the late 1980's.

In psychological terms the Hunter Report put out by the Secretary of State aptly describes how desperately unemployed youth feel:

> "Unemployment sends psychological shock waves resounding through the minds of young people. Deprived of work in a society that values traditional work they feel trapped in a cumulative downward spiral. It winds through deep feelings of inferiority to the destruction of self-confidence to a sense of futility to profound depression. It may end in sporadic violence or a general often enduring deterioration of the human being. If this despair becomes articulated and collectively felt, its implications are revolutionary".

It is little wonder then that many young people despair of finding any sort of work - let alone work that fits for them - work that is congruent to the education they have and the new humanistic values they possess. And too it is little wonder that economists are now having to demonstrate more clearly than in the past a concern for human values - not merely a preoccupation with profit maximization as has been the case for far too long now. A revised work ethic is very much with us now and as counsellors we need to know how to relate to all of these changing socio-economic phenomena that abound everywhere.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

At the conclusion of this research I offered a number of suggestions relating to youth unemployment. For example I urged that:

1. A long range, comprehensive and integrated approach to social and economic policy formation and implementation on behalf of unemployed youth should be undertaken across the country and the impetus for this should come from the public sector. The private business sector should also join more readily with the public sector in this approach.
2. Job creating opportunities such as through various career programmes, O.F.Y. and L.I.P. should be refined, extended and responsibly evaluated in an on-going cohesive manner.
3. Educational institutions, social agencies and other counselling resources should develop and extend their services to meet the large influx of about one million youth who annually pour into the labour force in the spring and summer months. This would require a concerted and integrated interaction amongst schools, community agencies, Canada Manpower and employers.
4. Assuming that counsellor authoritarianism stands in the way of helping unemployed youth find work, the dogmatic, close-minded approach should be identified, isolated and reduced by employing bodies wherever possible.
5. Highly authoritarian counsellors who may test out high on such instruments as the Rokeach Dogmatism Scale should not be allowed to counsel unemployed young people.
6. Before being recruited, hired or promoted, counsellors should be given personality tests such as the Rokeach Scale which is a powerful indicator of their general overall effectiveness and performance.
7. Authoritarian counsellors in particular should be exposed to and participate in personal growth and development sessions such as provided by T groups, sensitivity training and the like. This is in the hope that their interpersonal style may be modified towards a more tolerant, open-minded approach to people.

8. School counsellors in particular should devote more time and attention to the pressing needs of young job seekers trying to find immediate employment.
9. More counsellor advocacy is indicated: there should be less telling of counsellees to go to Manpower and other sources of employment on their own and more direct contact work with C.M.C. and prospective employers.
10. Counsellors should be familiar with the changing world of work and how youth are attempting to humanize the work marketplace. They are doing this by putting out values that are less oriented to economic competition and more oriented to reaching for authenticity, beauty, truth, co-operation and human service.

As in any research of this nature, many more questions seemed to emerge than were answered. I did not know quite how to end my thesis in this context except to say what I now say in closing.

To truly pursue the answers to the complex societal questions that lay before us today - as never before each one of us should heed the verse:

"I keep six honest serving men
They taught me all I knew:
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who."

(Rudyard Kipling - "The Serving Men")

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